



CBS NEWS
2020 M Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

FACE THE NATION

as broadcast over the

CBS Television Network

and the

CBS Radio Network

Sunday, July 8, 1979 -- 11:30 AM - 12:00 Noon, EDT

Origination: Washington, D. C.

GUEST: SEN. ROBERT BYRD
Senate Majority Leader

REPORTERS:

George Herman, CBS News

Lisa Myers, The Chicago Sun-Times

Phil Jones, CBS News

Producers: Joan Barone and Mary O. Yates

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HERMAN: Senator Byrd, in your talk with Soviet leaders last week, did you form any conclusion on whether they will accept the most likely Senate amendments to the SALT agreements?

SEN. BYRD: I think that they would be very concerned about any amendments that would bring about renegotiation of the treaty. I stated that I was not there to renegotiate the treaty, but I do feel that they have a better understanding of the Senate's role and a better understanding of amendments to the resolution of ratification that would relieve some of the concerns of senators and the American people without altering the treaty text.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS News, Washington, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on FACE THE NATION, with Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia. Senator Byrd will be questioned by CBS News Congressional Correspondent Phil Jones; by Lisa Myers, Congressional Correspondent for The Chicago Sun-Times; and by CBS News Correspondent George Herman.

HERMAN: Senator Byrd, I'm going to accuse you of having spent so much time with diplomats and heads of state that you're beginning to talk like them. I asked you whether you think the Russians are likely to accept any amendments, and you say they have a better understanding. Does a better understanding bear some relation to a better acceptance?

SEN. BYRD: It depends on what we're talking about. If you're talking about--

HERMAN: Well, you specify. I'll go along--

SEN. BYRD: It depends on what we're talking about. If we're talking about major changes in the treaty text, then that's one thing; that opens up the treaty for renegotiation, in which case the Soviets

would expect to open up some of their problem areas, and would probably demand some concessions where they--where they have already mentioned concessions. But if we're talking about amendments to the resolution of ratification, that help to clarify the meaning, that help to affirm the understanding of the Senate with respect to concerns that senators and the American people have, I think that the Soviets are now well aware of the import of these.

MYERS: The administration and the President have claimed that any alteration of the treaty in terms of an amendment would end the SALT process because the Soviets would refuse to return to the bargaining table. You are saying that's not the case--that they would return to the bargaining table, but would seek further concessions. Is that correct?

SEN. BYRD: I'm saying that if there's a--if there are basic changes in the treaty text itself, which--these would require renegotiations. In the event of renegotiation, the Soviets would say, okay, you're opening up the treaty on this point, we want to reopen it on this; you want a concession on this, we want concessions on this. But there's a difference in amendments to the treaty text and amendments to the resolution of ratification. Amendments by way of reservations, understandings, and so forth--the resolution of ratification can be quite meaningful, and I would expect that the Senate would make such; and I believe that, based on my conversations with Soviet leaders, they have a better understanding of this, and there could be such reaffirming, clarifying, reservations and understandings by way of amendments to the resolution of ratification that would relieve some of the concerns of myself, and other senators, and the American people.

JONES: Well, Senator, I'm still puzzled. Could you be specific?

SEN. BYRD: Yes.

JONES: After talking with the Soviet leaders, what changes can be made in this treaty that they will accept?

SEN. BYRD: I can't presume to speak for the Soviet leaders, but I can give you some examples, one being that of the protocol. I made it clear to--in my discussions with Soviet leaders--that in my judgment, the Senate would make indubitably clear the fact that the protocol is not to be considered a precedent; it's not to carry over. There is a definite limitation on the time, that being December 31, 1981, and I feel that the Senate will and ought to make clear that the protocol will not be extended beyond that time without the assent and the consent of the United States Senate. And this is very important to our European Allies as well, and I say this based on my conversations with President Giscard d'Estaing and the Defense Minister of France, as well as the Defense Minister of Italy. This is one example.

Another example would be the Backfire statement that was made by Mr. Brezhnev in Vienna, in which he said that the production of the Backfire would not exceed 30 per month, and that the radius of action would not be increased to the point that the Backfire would be given intercontinental capability. Now, if they think the Senate ought to write this in as a part of its condition--if it approves it--the ratification of the treaty--conditioned on that statement's being kept.

And a third area would be that of non-circumvention. This, too, is very important to our European Allies. I think we should make it absolutely clear, by way of a reservation, understanding, statement, whatever you want to call it--that the acceptance of the treaty is

being conditioned on our--on our being able to continue the existing pattern of collaboration with our European Allies, in terms of modernization of weapons and so on.

JONES: But Senator Byrd, for example, the Backfire bomber; now, if it is that important, why not put it into the treaty?

SEN. BYRD: Well, there are those who would like to see it in the treaty.

JONES: Would you?

SEN. BYRD: That is a point on which the Soviets have been very, very sticky, and they gave up other concessions in return for our concession not to include that. Mr. Brezhnev also promised that that Backfire bomber, the TUM-22, would not be given the capability of refueling in flight. So if we write into the resolution the condition that the treaty is approved on the basis of the statement that was made by the Soviet leader itself, that, in my judgment, does go a long way in relieving the concerns of myself and--and some senators, I should think.

HERMAN: This takes care of sort of half of the things that you talked about before you left Moscow. You said, in some things there their answers were quite satisfactory; in other things their answers were not so satisfactory. Now would you care to specify some of the unsatisfactory responses?

SEN. BYRD: An example would be that of not opposing the continued UN expeditionary force in the Middle East. I did not get a satisfactory answer on that, and yet, I did not get a wholly unsatisfactory one. I feel that there are other options, based on my discussions with Mr. Gromyko. There are other options that ought to be pursued that--which,

if raised in the right manner, might prove to be efficacious, and I have spoken to the President this morning about this--what I perceive to be an option, and he was very interested, and I will pursue it further with Mr. Vance. I think it's something that should be worked out through diplomatic channels.

HERMAN: You--we'll get back to your conversation and the President--with the President--in a moment, but I want to ask you, do you have some other unsatisfactory responses bearing on SALT, where you found their answers, as you said in Moscow, not reassuring.

SEN. BYRD: They were not all satisfactory. Some were satisfactory. There would be some that I would not want to go into detail about at this time. I think that all of the results are not in yet. It will take some time, in connection with some of the matters that I posed to the Soviets--I didn't go expecting a quick answer or simplistic answer on anything, and as I say, what the eventual Soviet response will be in connection with some things, will take a little time.

JONES: Did you make some proposals to them?

SEN. BYRD: I assume you're pursuing the matter I just mentioned, and that, to be specific, to give you one example, is that of a expressing interest in the cases of certain persons, like Mr. Schransky, whose cases are of interest to the American people.

JONES: You linked the --- Schransky to SALT?

SEN. BYRD: I had discussed--I did not link it, no, but I did discuss it briefly with Mr. Brezhnev. The discussions were of a confidential nature; I do not care to elaborate on them, but here again is--here is one of the examples of a matter which I discussed, the answer to which I don't yet have, but which there may be Soviet response--

MYERS: Senator, you previously have expressed concern as to whether we can catch the Soviets cheating on--if they chose to cheat on SALT II in the wake of intelligence losses in Iran. Now, there have been a number of proposals to make up some of that lost capability, many of which require some type of adherence or acceptance by the Soviet Union. One of those is the U-2 flights over Turkey. Did you discuss any of these verification issues with the Soviets, and did you impress upon them your concern in this area, particularly with regard to the U-2 flights?

SEN. BYRD: I expressed that particular item. I expressed the concern of the Senate, inasmuch as I had had an opportunity to talk with other senators--I made it a point to talk with other senators before I went on the trip--not 99 other senators, but a good many others, as many as I could possibly work into my schedule, so that when I went I took with me to the concerns of other senators, and I indicated that this was one of the major concerns of the Senate--

MYERS: What was their response?

SEN. BYRD: --and that the Senate would view that provision in the treaty with great care, and would expect it to be lived up to concisely--to wit, that the Soviets would not take any actions that would impede verification--

MYERS: But what was their response to this? Did they say that they would be willing to go along with U-2 flights? Did they say that they'd have to think about it?

SEN. BYRD: I don't think it would be profitable or wise for me to go into my discussions with respect to the U-2 flights over Turkey. I have reasons for saying this. I believe that the more important

thing is to consider the fact that Turkey has some very serious political and economic problems right now, and I feel that I'd better leave it at that.

MYERS: In the absence of U-2 flights and some of these other things that have been proposed, do you think that this treaty is adequately verifiable?

SEN. BYRD: I think it depends upon what is meant by adequate.

MYERS: Your definition, Senator.

SEN. BYRD: I think that this information will come out of the hearings. This is one reason why I have urged my colleagues not to take hardened positions early--

HERMAN: Are you leaning?

SEN. BYRD: --for the reason that I think that many of the questions will be answered in the course of the hearings.

HERMAN: Do you have a lean? Are you leaning for the--towards the treaty, or away from it at this point?

SEN. BYRD: As I told Mr. Brezhnev and Mr. Gromyko, I did not come to praise nor to condemn the treaty; I have not yet made up my own mind. I feel that if the vote were to be taken today, there would probably not be a two-thirds vote there, but that at the time when the treaty is voted on, perhaps in November, there may be two-thirds in favor of it, but that is by no means certain. So I'm not leaning for and I'm not leaning against at this point. I began, at the start, to approach this whole matter in a systematic and thorough, and I would hope, comprehensive way; and my visit to the Soviet Union was--is going to be a factor in my decision. But I've also said that I would want to at least hear part of the hearings--Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Intelligence--before I make a final decision.

HERMAN: Can we talk about your latest conversation with a world leader--you've talked to the President this morning. Did you call him; did he call you?

SEN. BYRD: He called me.

HERMAN: And can you tell us what the President had to say about the progress of the meetings at Camp David?

SEN. BYRD: He said very little about that. I've been invited to go; I am going because I want to give whatever support I can to the President. I have indicated that I'm not interested in drama; I'm interested in action, but I do feel that the President needs all of the support that he can get in developing plans to deal with the energy and inflation problem.

JONES: You say you're not interested in drama. Do you have a suspicion that that's what this is, political drama?

SEN. BYRD: I'm not saying that, but I do think that there are those in the administration who have put high drama ahead of sound planning.

JONES: Who's that?

SEN. BYRD: I'm not naming any names, and I don't know of any names, but I have my feelings.

HERMAN: Well, is that continuing? Is some sound planning now going on, or is it still all drama?

SEN. BYRD: That would appear to be the case, that there is some sound planning going on, and I would think it recreant of me not to go when the President has asked me as majority leader to come, and make whatever contributions I can make. I have, as you know, submitted the names of Senators who deal--who I consider to be experts in the energy

problem, and I submitted to the President the names of Senators whom I think are experts in dealing with economic problems, inflation and so on, and the President is going to be meeting with them and has already met with some of them.

MYERS: Senator, the President has slipped to such a low point in the polls that many pollsters and other observers believe he cannot recover. No other President has ever recovered from such a low standing in the eyes of the American people. His own domestic advisors say energy is becoming his Vietnam. Do you believe--do you concur with that analogy--do you think the President can be reelected, or do you think it's time for the Democrats to start looking for a stronger candidate to top the ticket?

SEN. BYRD: I think it's entirely too early to say ^{that} the President ^{done} is down for the count. He has--he has/very well in many pro--many issues, foreign policy and domestic, and with the support of the Senate he has an exceptionally good report card, I think, thus far, on foreign policy issues, and on some of the domestic issues.

There are problems that are not only problems to the United States. The problem of inflation, the problem of energy is not only a national problem, but it's a world wide problem, and these forces that are external impact on our ability to deal with the problem domestically, in many instances. I would think that there's a year and a half yet; many things can change, and the President has indicated he will be a candidate, and I think that if he demonstrates leadership in connection with the energy problem and other issues that are of very great importance to the American people, that picture can change.

MYERS: Are you endorsing him now for reelection?

SEN. BYRD: I'm simply answering your question, as you first asked it.

JONES: Do you think it's unfair for Democrats to be organizing such things as draft Ted Kennedy movement and so forth?

SEN. BYRD: Democrats will do that; I'm not--

JONES: I realize that (LAUGHTER). Do you think that--

SEN. BYRD: Let me finish that. Let me respond to your question. Mr. Kennedy has said that he is not a candidate, ^{that} / he expects Mr. Carter to be a candidate; he expects Mr. Carter to win; he expects to support him--

JONES: Do you think Senator Kennedy--

BYRD: I think at this time we ought to leave it with what Mr. Kennedy has stated.

JONES: But this is pulling the party--a part of the problem--and do you think that out of fairness to the President that Ted Kennedy, for example, should say, I will not accept the nomination in 1980?

SEN. BYRD: I don't presume to tell Ted Kennedy what he should do; I'm quite confident that he's capable of deciding for himself what he ought to say and when he ought to say it.

JONES: Would Senator Kennedy be better for Democrats in the Senate who are running for reelection in 1980 if he--if he were heading the ticket?

SEN. BYRD: In so far as Democrats in the Senate who are running for reelection, I should think that as we have seen so many times in the past, the factors of regional concern and the personal attributes of the candidates themselves really are what the people in their particular states, in the case of members of the House, ^{particular} their/Congressional dis-

tricts, really make the judgments on, not so much who is at the head of the ticket.

HERMAN: Let's--let's try West Virginia. West Virginia once decided between a Kennedy and Senator Humphrey. Where does West Virginia stand today on President Carter and his policies?

SEN. BYRD: I think I've enunciated that very well in saying that the President is--is--he has a problem, but I think that he has done very well in many issues, many of which his predecessors had delayed, many of which converged on him at a point in time when he had to deal with them, and the problem is that so many people overlook the good marks on the report card in the light of what is immediate, and I believe that the people of West Virginia, if--if Mr. Carter can bring forth an energy program that reflects leadership, if he can galvanize the American people into action, if they can really be sure that we have an energy problem, I believe that the American people have the capacity to get behind a leader.

HERMAN: Is that likely--that he will come forward with this kind of program?

SEN. BYRD: I would hope so, and I think that the fact that he has gone to Camp David, has delayed his statement, indicates that he's trying to come up with sound planning, and that it--he will provide that leadership, if he is able to come up with a sound plan, ^{and} he's doing what I suggested all along. He's attempting to get the advice of others before announcing that there will be an announcement. That has been the problem. I'm not so concerned about the cancellation of his speech, for example, as I am that there be sound planning first.

MYERS: Senator, in light of all these critical domestic problems

and the administration's inability thus far to deal with them, can the nation afford for the Senate to spend months debating the SALT II treaty that a lot of people think just doesn't really matter that much?

SEN. BYRD: The SALT II treaty is vital to the security interests of this country, whether you take--whether you're for it or against it, one has to view that it is vital, not only to the security interests of this country, but to our relations with our allies, and in this regard, may I say that it was the opinion of President Giscard d'Estaing and the Defense Ministers of Italy and France that if the SALT treaty is rejected, we could expect a stimulated arms race, we could expect a renewal of the cold war atmosphere, and we could also expect the possible isolation of the United States from its European allies. So this is not a matter that can be put off in the corner and covered over and while it may not be as dramatic--and it isn't, certainly, as the gas lines, and not as immediate--it certainly is immediate in terms of the short run and long run security interests of this country.

MYERS: Speaking of gas lines, is it time for gasoline rationing?
gasoline

SEN. BYRD: Well, it's certainly time for a standby/rationing plan. I've advocated here that the President send up a new plan, not new legislation, but a new plan which will have a built-in time agreement, and a plan the facets of which can be worked out in advance by the members of the Senate and the members of the House who know something about energy, and something that will be a consensus, and around which a majority can be built.

JONES: Senator, concerning the SALT debate--several Senators on both sides of the treaty have written you, urging that there be television coverage of the--of the floor debate. The Senate Foreign Relations

Committee has indicated it thinks there ought to be television coverage, yet so far, there's no indication that you are willing to add any of your leadership clout to letting the American people come in and see this debate on the Senate floor. Why are you reluctant to do this?

SEN. BYRD: Well, you're putting the word reluctant in my mouth. I choose to make my own words. My first responsibility as Majority Leader is to do whatever I can to see that the Senate reaches a sound judgment in connection with this very important and vital question.

To reach that judgment, I have to weigh whether or not in the kind of atmosphere that would be created by a televised debate--

JONES: What would that be?

SEN. BYRD: Let me finish. Whether or notⁱⁿ the kind of atmosphere that would be completed---that would be created by a televised debate the judgment of every Senator would be non-partisan, would be affected solely by the facts, and would not be affected by something that's distracting, or something that is peripheral. Now the matter is being considered; I will continue to consider. Who knows, the answer may be yes, but I have not^{said} the answer would be no.

JONES: But Senator--

SEN. BYRD: My first responsibility is what I'm going to adhere to-- it's my first priority to see that that debate is thorough, comprehensive, and hopefully the kind of debate that will lead to a considered judgment, and one that is fair, and one that is right.

JONES: Isn't a factor that's just as important as all of those things you mentioned, though, the fact that the American public should be able to see every phase of this debate?

SEN. BYRD: They will--they will see every phase of this debate.

For 190 years, with the exception of the first five years--

JONES: But they won't--

SEN. BYRD: --when the United States Senate was closed, the American people have known what was going on in the Senate. The print media, the radio, the TV observers in there and report adequately on what's going on, artists make sketches--

JONES: But no television.

SEN. BYRD: --I'm not saying--I'm not saying that there won't be television, but I'm saying that I'm going to consider that very carefully, and that my first priority, is, as I have stated--

JONES: Not the American people.

My first priority

SEN. BYRD: /is the American people, that they get the right judgment on a very crucial and vital matter.

MYERS: Are you saying that television coverage would affect the votes of certain Senators, for example, some have suggested that you're worried about Minority Leader Howard Baker running for President for two months.

SEN. BYRD: Well, you've made your suggestion; you've not heard that from me. I have said all along that I would hope that every judgment of every Senator would not be partisan. I think it's vital to the American people and its security interests that the judgments not be partisan.

HERMAN: Thank you very much, Senator, for being our guest today on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: Today on FACE THE NATION, Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia was interviewed by CBS News Congressional Correspondent Phil Jones, by Lisa Myers, Congressional Correspondent for the Chicago Sun-Times, and by CBS News Correspondent George Herman. Next week, another prominent figure in the news will FACE THE NATION.